

MINUTES

Mayor's Advisory Committee
Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan
Campbell Senior Center--155 High Street

March 3, 2004
7 p.m.

PRESENT: Nancy Nathanson, Chair; Dale Berg, Merle Bottge, Roxie Cuellar, Corey Dingman, Art Farley, Steve Johnson, Avishai Schermerhorn, Linda Swisher, Tim Whitley, members; Andrea Riner, Carrie Peterson, Parks and Open Space Division; Renee Grube, Tim Patrick, LRCS; Misty Fisher, Sally McIntyre, MIG, Inc.

I. WELCOME

Ms. Nathanson convened the meeting. She apologized to the committee because she had begun to feel as though she was letting members down in terms of the commitment the City had made to them regarding the amount of time the committee process would require. She said the committee would soon begin the “nuts and bolts” process of decision making. Ms. Nathanson said the analysis the committee would consider would inform its later decisions. She committed to taking more responsibility for agenda setting for the committee.

Members indicated willingness to proceed with the work of the committee until its task was completed.

Ms. Riner concurred with the remarks of Ms. Nathanson. She said the committee had been given considerable analysis but she believed the analysis represented the information the committee needed to do its task. She said staff would not let the quality of the process drop.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ed Fredette and **Elijah Mack** appeared before the committee to advocate for its consideration of a habitat restoration/development proposal for the canoe canal at Alton Baker Park. Mr. Fredette, chair of the Habitat Subcommittee of the Citizen Planning Committee (CPC) for the Whilamut Natural Area, described the proposal, which included the creation of a manmade water feature. Mr. Mack, a member of the World River Surfing Association, spoke of the growing national interest in water surfing and other river-related sports, and the economic and recreational benefits of such water features. He noted that Eugene was home to world champion river surfer, Jake McKay. He believed Eugene could be a “Mecca” for paddle and board sports.

Mr. Fredette indicated that Carolyn Weiss of the Parks and Open Space Division had a copy of his thesis, which reflected the restoration/development proposal. He believed both construction and operating costs were relatively low. He said that advocates were also looking for other opportunities in the community.

Mr. Fredette mentioned support by organizations such as the CPC, University Club Sports, and Oregon River Sports. He reported that a design charette for the project would occur in April.

Mr. Johnson requested that the committee be provided with copies of Mr. Fredette's proposal. Mr. Fredette noted that Parks and Open Space staff had a copy. Ms. McIntyre indicated that information about other similar facilities in other communities would also be useful.

Mr. Johnson asked Mr. Fredette to comment on issues related to staffing, maintenance, and legal liability. Mr. Fredette indicated he would provide the committee with that information, noting that Eugene would not be "reinventing the wheel" and reiterating that examples already existed in other places.

III. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROCESS UPDATE

Ms. Riner distributed fliers for the upcoming April 3 Design Forum. She invited members to contact her to obtain more fliers for distribution. Ms. Riner described the outreach and publicity being done for the event, and encouraged members to attend the forum.

Ms. Riner distributed and reviewed a schedule of upcoming meetings.

IV. DRAFT PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ANALYSIS

Ms. McIntyre provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the findings of the Open Space Analysis, focusing on the assessment of facilities. Copies of the analysis were provided to members in their packets.

Ms. McIntyre reviewed *Table 2, Park & Open Space Standards and Anticipated Need*. She noted the recommended standard of 20 acres of parkland per 1,000. The table projected a demand for an additional 1,316.04 acres of parkland by 2025. There were no questions regarding this table.

Ms. McIntyre reviewed *Table 3, Outdoor Recreation Amenities, Natural Area Amenities, and Facility Needs*. Among other things, the table contrasted the existing level of service with a proposed level of service. She noted that staff did not recommend the City adopt an overall standard in this area. Members asked questions clarifying the information in the table.

Ms. Nathanson solicited questions and comments about the analysis from committee members.

Mr. Farley observed that it was not clear how the various needs fit together at this point. He suggested the committee needed to keep in mind the disappearance of existing natural areas as community parks were redeveloped.

Mr. Dingman believed the definition of natural area was somewhat unclear, as he did not define grass as a natural area. Ms. McIntyre clarified that lawns were not included in the definition. The natural areas were either identified as significant in inventories or were areas identified by staff in existing parks. She noted

the definition was included in Appendix 4. Ms. Riner added that such areas were managed for their natural resource values.

Ms. Cuellar cautioned the committee that it needed to discuss “need” in a realistic manner. She noted the many competing public priorities and pointed out the land required to meet the projected demand would cost more than \$105 million. She suggested the need should be adjusted if the community could not support the level of service identified as the need.

Responding to a question from Mr. Berg, Ms. McIntyre clarified the demand estimated for 2025 reflected demand inside the city limits. Mr. Berg questioned if the boundaries would expand over time.

Speaking to Ms. Cuellar’s concerns, Ms. Girling noted there was some overlap in acreage reflected in Table 3. She cited natural areas as an example. She said that while the City was not specifying a standard for linear parks, they were also included in the acreage of other park types. She perceived quite a bit of overlap in that area.

Ms. Girling offered several suggestions to the committee. She said she would like to see a policy statement or strategy that encouraged the City to look at restoration of degraded lands and resources within the city as a source of parkland. She cited the rail yard redevelopment as an example of such an opportunity. She thought sports fields could be a good use for that type of land. She said portions of Amazon Creek were not considered natural now but the lands already in public ownership could be restored to a natural state. Ms. Girling believed there were other similar restoration opportunities on lands already in public ownership, including lands owned by agencies other than the City, noting her classes often used a site near Chambers Street and 18th Avenue as an example of a site where a stormwater park could be installed.

Regarding service areas, Ms. Girling said the City’s nodal development policies called for services in nodes to be within one-quarter mile walking distance to where people lived. She suggested the City’s current park standard of one-half mile be adjusted to match. She also believed that the City may not be able to afford five-acre neighborhood parks in all areas and suggested such parks could be smaller, particularly if the City adjusted its park standard. Ms. Girling did not believe the City would be able to find five acres of vacant lands in all the nodes.

Ms. Girling said that other Oregon cities use the term “greenway” and she thought the City could apply to it greenways outside the Willamette River. She said that the public found greenways to be a positive and compelling thing. She suggested the public would find an Amazon Creek Greenway more understandable than an Amazon Creek Linear Park.

Ms. Bottge said that the analysis appeared to assume one type of facility for each service area, but she questioned the appropriateness of that as some of the service areas were larger than others. She suggested the issue depended on where within the area a facility was located, and suggested staff be more specific in its planning.

Mr. Johnson did not think a planning document had to be tied to funding levels. He believed the plan represented a community vision. He thought the analysis represented a minimum standard rather than an aspirational standard. He expected it would cost the City more to realize a more aspirational vision. Mr.

Johnson did not think the committee should be too concerned about funding, which would be addressed in another forum. He believed the community should have purchased the needed parkland long ago, and found it essential the City begin to “buy and bank” land for parks. Like Ms. Bottge, Mr. Johnson also did not think each service area needed to have equal facilities, and suggested the linear Amazon Creek greenway created some connectivity between the different areas. He said the committee needed to think about where facilities went and that connectivity.

Mr. Johnson said that committee needed to determine the amount of natural area needed. He suggested that projections might not be sufficient because one could best enjoy a natural area in relative solitude, and the acreage projections might not allow for that. He said that did not understand the relationship between the standard proposed and the use of those facilities.

Mr. Johnson suggested the committee consider a 2025 planning horizon.

Ms. McIntyre noted the analysis was focused on the minimum need for the future rather than what could be afforded. She said the City would use the information to develop a proposed capital improvement program of projects.

Responding to a question from Mr. Schermerhorn, Ms. McIntyre said that private facilities such as skate parks do have an impact on demand, but it was difficult for the City to inventory and quantify those private facilities. She said that the schools provided more facilities than the private sector. Ms. Riner added that staff would attempt to identify local potential partners for all facilities. Ms. McIntyre concurred, saying the City was not the sole provider for such facilities.

Responding to a question from Mr. Dingman, Ms. Riner indicated no parks acreage had been double-counted. Ms. McIntyre referred committee members to Appendix C for more information about acreages and park types, and further noted that Appendix D had the same information broken into planning area. She briefly overviewed those appendices and encouraged members to review them in more detail.

Mr. Dingman asked if the City had a facility condition report for school district fields. Ms. McIntyre said no. Mr. Dingman asked if a school backstop, for example, qualified as a field. Ms. McIntyre said that was a factor in the entire analysis; not all fields were of comparable quality and not all met safety guidelines. Some of that was captured in the evaluation of recreation amenities, which was in another appendix. Ms. McIntyre noted that if a facility could be used for a Kidsports game, it was counted as a field.

Ms. Nathanson termed the analysis a huge achievement and a milestone in the committee’s progress. Referring to the terminology used in the analysis, she asked the staff to be consistent and use jargon already in use that was readily understood by all. For example, when she thought of an urban plaza, the Broadway Plaza came to mind.

Ms. Nathanson suggested that the reference to “linear parks” be changed to “linear parks and multi-use trails” for greater community understanding. She also thought it would be useful if the information about acreages in this area was framed instead in terms of units of measures such as feet or fraction of miles to convey the experience of moving from one place to another.

Speaking to comments about lands owned by other public entities, Ms. Nathanson noted the Eugene Water & Electric Board's reservoirs, which were often used by the public and were often in a natural state but were not included in the analysis. She suggested the potential the tops of reservoirs could be used for tennis courts. Ms. Bottge concurred with Ms. Nathanson, saying the College Hill reservoir was very popular with the public.

Ms. Nathanson thanked staff for starting to think about how the school facilities could be folded into the committee's discussion. She anticipated the committee would hear more good ideas at the April forum.

Referring to the subject of outdoor recreation, Mr. Johnson said the committee could not know the demand for recreation that would exist in 2025. For example, no one had envisioned skate parks or the types of water features discussed earlier in the meeting 20 years ago. Ms. McIntyre concurred. She suggested the committee discuss the issue when it discussed strategies. She anticipated the community would be involved in site planning and design as facilities were constructed and new activities were accommodated.

Mr. Johnson noted that the two pools operated by the University of Oregon were not listed, nor was the track, and all those facilities were used by the public to some degree.

Ms. Girling invited committee members to a gallery display sponsored by her University of Oregon class occurring the next day in Room 231 at Lawrence Hall, at which class members would share open space visions for Eugene and Springfield.

Ms. Nathanson suggested staff modify the number of community centers to reflect the current situation as there were not actually ten community centers operating as such.

V. NEXT STEPS

Ms. Nathanson asked that the committee be given an opportunity to approve the most recent and the oldest set of minutes at the next meeting.

Ms. Nathanson encouraged all members to attend the upcoming forum.

Ms. Nathanson acknowledged the meeting was Ms. Girling's last. She recalled Ms. Girling's extensive history of community service and said she would be missed.

The next meeting was scheduled for April 7, 2004.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)